

Eastern Great Basin Safety Alert

July 20, 2005

Subject: Likelihood of strong outflow winds and downbursts from dry thunderstorms.

Area of Concern: Firefighter Safety

Distribution: Nationwide

Discussion: Isolated to widely scattered dry thunderstorms are predicted for southwest and south central Utah and Southern Nevada today and northern Utah, northeast Nevada and southeast Idaho on Thursday and Friday. These storms can produce wind gusts of 40-60 miles per hour. Heavier than normal fuel loading in grass fuel models will contribute to rapid fire growth. Fire intensity will make containment difficult. ERC values are at critical levels over the southern half of the Great Basin and will contribute to difficulty mopping up.

Inactive fires can spring back to life with a sudden change of weather brought about by thunderstorms. Dramatic increases in winds from thunderstorms will contribute to rapid fire buildup, high fire intensity and unpredictable directions of fire spread. This rapid buildup in fire intensity can reduce the time required to reach **Safety Zones**.

All fire personnel should be briefed about the possibility of these storms materializing on any fire in the forecast area and the consequences of the accompanying winds. Post lookouts and establish escape routes and safety zones that can be reached quickly. Fire shelter deployment time may be quickly reduced.

There is a good chance that moisture levels will increase over the forecast area by Friday and Friday night reducing the fire threat somewhat.